MARVEL COMICS

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# IRON MAN

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OLD GOAT

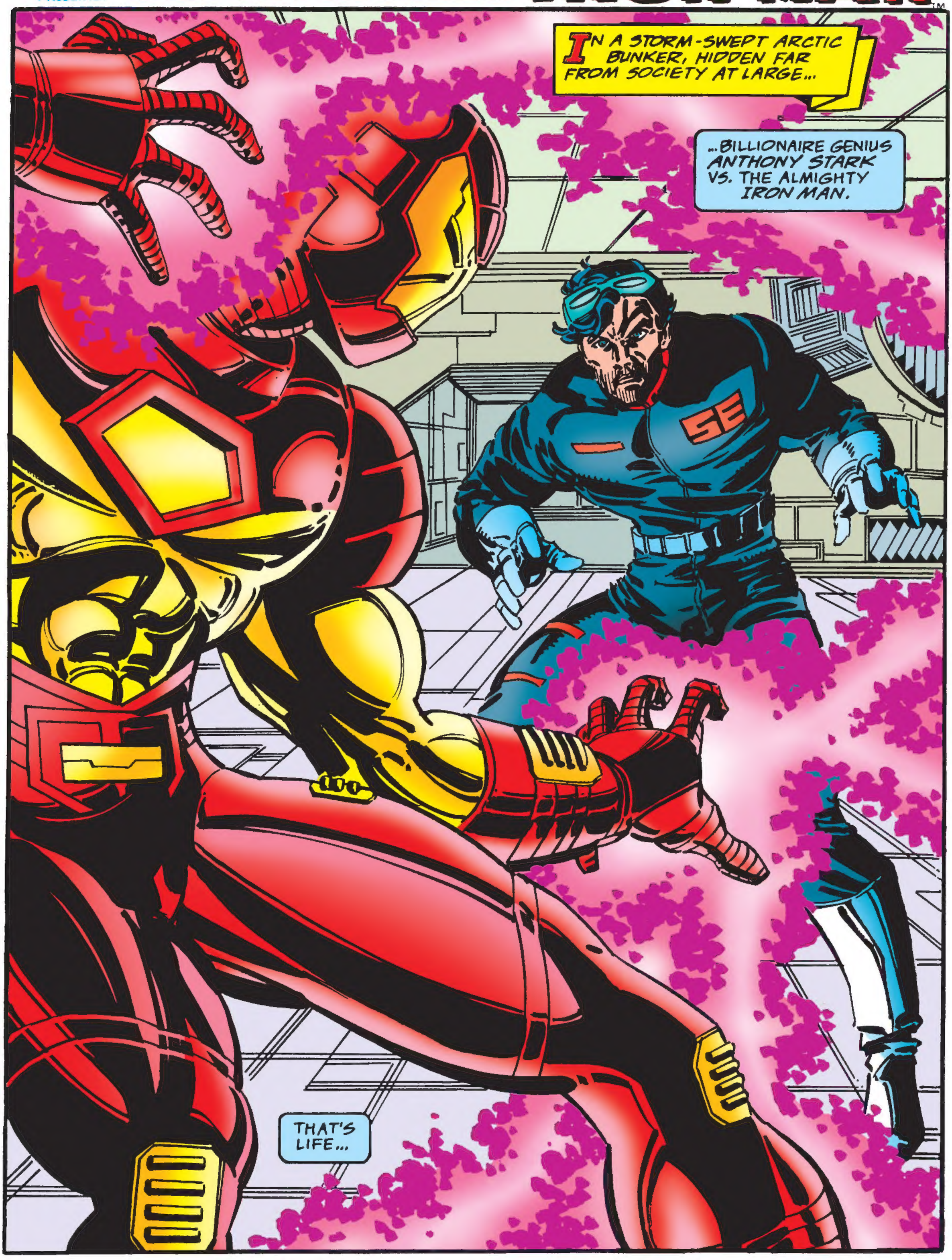
OLD GOAT

TOM MORGAN 1995

THANKS FOR THE RIDE, MARVEL! ADIOS!

WHEN MULTI-BILLIONAIRE INDUSTRIALIST TONY STARK, INVENTOR EXTRAORDINAIRE, DONS HIS SOLAR-CHARGED, STEEL-MESH ARMOR, HE BECOMES A HIGH-TECH WARRIOR—THE WORLD'S GREATEST HUMAN FIGHTING MACHINE!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: # THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN™


IN A STORM-SWEPT ARCTIC BUNKER, HIDDEN FAR FROM SOCIETY AT LARGE...
...BILLIONAIRE GENIUS ANTHONY STARK VS. THE ALMIGHTY IRON MAN.
SE
THAT'S LIFE...

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...MY LIFE, AT LEAST.

# SHADOWS CALL

TOM MORGAN ARTIST
PHIL FELIX LETTERER
ARIANE COLORIST
NEL YOMTOV EDITOR
MARK GRUENWALD ED. IN CHIEF

COMPUTER COLOR SEPARATIONS BY: MALIBU

ALL WELCOME ABOARD NEW WRITER TERRY KAVANAGH

OUTSIDE THESE HOLO-HALLS, OF COURSE, IRON MAN'S ACTIONS CUT FAR DEEPER THAN THIS.

WE'RE ONE AND THE SAME MAN UNDER THE ARMOR, AFTER ALL. JUST NEVER KNOW HOW MUCH THE *REAL* TONY STARK BRINGS TO THE SUIT ANYMORE...

...AND HOW MUCH IS STILL *HOLLOW.*

THE SLAGHT TRAGEDY* BROUGHT IT ALL SCREAMING TO A HEAD FOR ME. *ANOTHER* LOSS I COULDN'T AFFORD-- THE MAN WHO MEANT *MOST* IN THE WORLD TO ME--

KLK!

*LAST ISSUE. --NEL

--SACRIFICED BY MY *OWN* HAND...

I NEED TO GO BACK TO FIND *WHERE* IT ALL BEGAN TO GO WRONG-- *WHEN* CONTROL STARTED TO SLIP AWAY FROM ME SOMEHOW--

--WHEN AND WHERE I BECAME NOTHING BUT A *PAWN* IN A GAME OF HEROES AND VILLAINS.

SINCE THE VERY BEGINNING, *WITH* THE ASSEMBLED *AVENGERS*-- AGAINST OVER-WHELMING THREATS FROM LOKI AND *KANG THE CONQUEROR*--

--OR ALONE AGAINST THE LIKES OF JACK FROST...

...NOTHING COULD EVER STOP ME.

WHEN I PUT MY MIND TO IT.

TEK

LONG BEFORE IRON MAN WAS EVEN A GLEAM IN MY EYE, I WAS HEAD OF THE CLASS AND TOP OF MY FIELD.

YOUNG TONY STARK WAS UN-EQUALED WEAPONS MAKER TO THE WORLD-- TURNING MILLIONS INTO BILLIONS BY THE TIME I WAS TWENTY-ONE--

--UNTIL CAUGHT BY AN EXPLOSIVE WITH MY NAME ON IT, IN A BLAST OF MY OWN MAKING. LITERALLY.

A MINE MANUFACTURED BY STARK INTER-NATIONAL MUNITIONS.

MY HEART WAS NEVER THE SAME AGAIN.

AND IN A WAR-TORN LAND FAR FROM THE SAFETY OF HOME-- UNDER IMMINENT THREAT OF DEATH FROM MY CAPTORS WITHOUT, AND THE BITING SHRAPNEL WITHIN--

...I NEEDED HELP.

--I DID WHAT WAS NECESSARY TO SURVIVE...

...DESIGNING A LIFE-SAVING RESPIRATOR FOR MYSELF, DIS-GUISED AS AN ARMORED ARMORY FOR THE BLOOD-THIRSTY ENEMY.

BUT, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE...

PROFESSOR YINSEN WAS THE GREATEST PHYSICIST OF HIS TIME.

AND TWICE THE HERO I COULD EVER PRETEND TO BE.

JUST TO BUY ME A LAST FEW PRECIOUS SECONDS TO DON THE SUIT WE'D BUILT TOGETHER--

--THE HELPLESS YINSEN DIED...

...SO THE INVINCIBLE **IRON MAN** COULD BE BORN!

VENGEANCE WAS SHORT AND SWEET--

--THE SURGING POWER AND SENSE OF FREEDOM SO INTOXICATING--

--BUT ULTIMATELY EMPTY...

DISENGAGE HOLO-TAPES.

THIS IS GETTING ME NOWHERE...

EVEN FASTER THAN USUAL, BOY.

FATHER--!?

JUST HOW DO YOU EXPECT TO STAY SO AHEAD OF YOUR TIME, HOT-SHOT...

...TRAPPED AND WALLOWING IN YOUR OWN LITTLE PAST?

IMAGINATION'S REALLY WORKING OVERTIME NOW. HOWARD AND MARIA STARK ARE LONG DEAD AND GONE, ALMOST A DECADE NOW.

BUT--HE'S PERSUASIVE--AS USUAL--

KLK!

--AND TO THE POINT.

THE WORK IS WHAT COUNTS FOR ME THESE DAYS--

--THE DISTRACTION THAT GETS ME THROUGH THE NIGHTS--

--PERHAPS ALL THAT KEEPS ME SANE...

T22T T22T

FITS LIKE A SECOND SKIN.

THE IRON MAN *ARMOR* HAS ALWAYS *SHIELDED* ME FROM HARM--PROTECTED ME FROM THE WORLD OUTSIDE-- IN MORE WAYS THAN JUST THE OBVIOUS.

AND MAYBE EVEN VICE-VERSA.

KRZZK

MY *HEART'S* BEEN *FIXED* SO MANY TIMES SINCE THE ORIGINAL DAMAGE DONE-- FINALLY EVEN *REPLACED* WITH THE BEST THAT MONEY CAN BUY--

--YET IT STILL FEELS SO... SO...

...BROKEN?

SON.

I KNOW THIS *ISN'T* REAL. I *KNOW* IT.

BUT I NEED IT.

ABOUT TIME.

IF THAT'S WHAT I THINK IT IS--*HOPE* IT IS--

BEEP BEEP BEEP

--I CAN'T WASTE ANOTHER MINUTE HERE.

KLK

WHRRR

BOOSTER-BOOTS WILL PUT ME IN POSITION ALONG THE CORRECT PARALLEL...

VWSSS

...BY THE TIME THE BUNKER LOCKS DOWN BEHIND ME.

JUST A MATTER OF GAINING ENOUGH *ALTITUDE* NOW...

...TO ESCAPE THE ATMOSPHERE COMPLETELY.

AND STOPPING--

--DEAD.

WHOOSH

PLP

...IN RELATION TO THE EARTH'S ROTATION.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA IN ONE-POINT-FOUR SECONDS FLAT.

MAGNETI-BRAKES FIELD-TEST PERFECTLY...

KWSH

...TOO BAD THE POWER-DRAIN'S IMPRACTICAL FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES.

STARK ENTERPRISES

I'LL HAVE TO WORK ON THAT...

KLK

WHRRR

...AFTER TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS.

--THANK YOU AGAIN FOR COMING, PETER.

MY PLEASURE, ANTHONY, AS ALWAYS.

AFTER VERY CAREFUL CONSIDER-ATION OF YOUR BID-- AND YOUR HISTORY OF SUCCESS WITH THESE ENDEAVORS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR--

--STARCORE IS ONLY TOO PLEASED TO AWARD THE CONTRACT FOR AMERICA'S NEWEST COMMUNICATIONS AND RESEARCH SATELLITE TO STARK ENTERPRISES.

IN THAT CASE, DOCTOR, I'M EQUALLY PROUD TO PRESENT--

--LIGHTS, PLEASE--

--STARCORP COMMAND.

PETER CORBEAU WAS AN EASY MARK; HAD HIM CHARMED SINCE DAY ONE. BUT GYRICH IS LIAISON TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON THIS PROJECT--THE REAL SHADOW-BROKER--

--AND A MUCH TOUGHER READ ALL ALONG.

WHRR

POP

WHRR

ANY QUESTIONS...?

CONFIDENT, WEREN'T YOU, SIR...?

ALWAYS.

MR. STARK, WERE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT THE U.N. DELAYS ALONG THE WAY?

NEVER.

NOT EVEN--

NOT EVEN.

TONY BUILT THIS ENTIRE COMPLEX WITHOUT EVEN WAITING FOR FINAL APPROVALS.

HE'S BACK, MRS. ARBOGAST!

AND BETTER THAN EVER FROM THE LOOKS OF THIS SET-UP.

ERICA DOESN'T KNOW MR.S WELL ENOUGH TO RECOGNIZE THE THIN LINE HE STRADDLES BETWEEN CONFIDENCE AND ARROGANCE...

...BUT ABE'S AS WORRIED AS I AM.

BETHANY'S WATCHING ME LIKE A HAWK. ALMOST AS IF... PERHAPS...

NO.

JUST EARNING HER SALARY AS HEAD OF SECURITY.

HAPPY HOGAN.

ONE OF MY OLD FRIENDS FROM WAY BACK WHEN...

GOOD TO HAVE HIM HERE TODAY.

AND PEPPER POTTS.

PEPPER POTTS HOGAN.

Hmm, MAYBE LIFE WAS NEVER REALLY AS SIMPLE AS I LIKE TO REMEMBER IT...

...MAYBE IT NEVER WILL BE.

NO MATTER HOW LONG I'VE BEEN HERE--HOW MANY ROOTS I TRY TO PUT DOWN, OFFICES AND HOUSES I PUT UP--

--THIS CITY STILL DOESN'T FEEL LIKE *HOME* TO ME.

I WEAR ALL MY OLD *WOUNDS* TOO PROUDLY TO PUT THE PAST BEHIND ME.

THE *OPEN-HEART SURGERY* THAT FINALLY FREED ME OF THE RESPIRATOR.

THE *BULLET* THAT SHATTERED MY SPINE, CRIPPLED ME--PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY--FOR SO LONG.

REAL BATTLE-SCARS OF LIFE. TONY STARK'S LIFE.

NOT BADGES OF COURAGE FOR IRON MAN, MEDALS OF HONOR FOR THE METAL MAN.

WHEN THE ARMOR IS MARRED OR DAMAGED, IT'S JUST A MATTER OF FINDING THE RIGHT *TOOLS* TO--

TONY...?

YOU READY TO TALK NOW...?

--I WAS AS SURPRISED AS YOU AT MY RESPONSE.

GUESS FEELINGS LIKE OURS NEVER QUITE DIE.

NEVER EASILY, AT LEAST.

WHEN YOU SHOWED UP HERE AFTER THE PRESS CONFERENCE, YOU JUST SEEMED SO NEEDY--SO DESPERATE--

AND THERE ARE NO SECRETS LEFT BETWEEN US ANYMORE.

NO FEAR OF WHAT WE'LL FIND IF WE LOOK TOO CLOSE--

BETH, I...

BETHANY...

THE *FORCE WORKS* COMPOUND IS HARDLY A QUIET RETREAT...

...BUT I GET A CERTAIN SATISFACTION OUT OF WHAT WE'VE PUT TOGETHER HERE. A *HARMONY* I CAN'T SEEM TO FIND ELSEWHERE ANYMORE.

A SENSE OF TEAMWORK AND CAMARADERIE THAT I'VE TRULY *MISSED*...

...SINCE THE *SCARLET WITCH* AND I FOUGHT SIDE-BY-SIDE AS AVENGERS.

*SPIDER-WOMAN*, *CENTURY* AND *U.S. AGENT* ARE HOLDING THEIR OWN AGAINST EMBER AND THE BLACK BRIGADE AT HOLO-LEVEL THREE...

...LET'S PUMP THE VROOM ROOM UP TO FIVE.

HOW 'BOUT SOME HELPFUL HINTS FROM OL' SHELLHEAD, WITCH...?

...'FORE YOU GO UPPIN' THE ANTE WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE.

I'M FIELD-LEADER OF THIS CREW, AGENT.

I SET THE STAKES...

...YOU PLAY IT MY WAY.

DO YOU SEE, TONY?

CAN YOU FINALLY GET IT NOW?

THIS IS THE POSITION YOU PUT ME IN. BY PLACING ME IN CHARGE...

...AND THEN IGNORING MY AUTHORITY AT EVERY TURN.

STILL BELIEVE THERE'S A GENUINE NEED FOR ALL THIS.

THE STRENGTH IN NUMBERS, THE FACILITY TO PROACTIVELY SEEK OUT PROBLEMS AT THEIR SOURCE --BEFORE THEY GROW BEYOND CONTROL--

--BUT I'M JUST NOT SURE WHAT ROLE I...

ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING TO ME, MISTER?

HAVE YOU HEARD A SINGLE WORD I'VE SAID?!

OH.

YES, YES, OF COURSE...

...NICE OUTFIT, WANDA.

VRRM

YOU WERE THE *PERFECT* TEAM-MATE ONCE UPON A TIME, TONY STARK.

THE BEST OF THE BRIGHTEST AMONG US...

WHAT IS WITH YOU THESE DAYS--?!

SO LOST IN MY OWN HEAD LATELY...

...DON'T KNOW WHY I DIDN'T THINK OF THIS *SOONER*.

ROUND UP THE USUAL SUSPECTS.

TOMORROW AT THE MANSION, LATE AFTERNOON.

WITH *PLEASURE*, MASTER STARK.

BUT IF YOU DON'T MIND MY SAYING SO, SIR--

WHEN DID THAT EVER STOP YOU, OLD FRIEND?

--THIS IS UNEXPECTED.

IT'S NOT LIKE YOU TO BE SO... SPONTANEOUS.

THE TIMES THEY ARE A' CHANGIN', JARVIS.

AND THIS LITTLE *GATHERING* IS OVERDUE...

...LONG OVERDUE.

POSSIBLY THE GREATEST EVENT IN THE HISTORY OF IRON MAN AND THE AVENGERS BEGINS NEXT MONTH IN THE ONE-SHOT SPECIAL **AVENGERS: THE CROSSING!** IT WILL ROCK THEIR UNIVERSE LIKE NOTHING BEFORE. AND ONCE DONE, THINGS WILL NEVER BE THE SAME...